



# **Naval Station Ingleside**

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**For Immediate Release**

## **Mine Warfare ships survey LOOP, aiding resumption of oil production, shipping**

Four mine warfare ships from Ingleside, Texas, recently finished surveying the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP) and safety fairways south of Grand Isle, which was a critical tasking in support of putting U.S. oil production and shipping back into play, after the devastation left behind by Hurricane Katrina. They are surveying offshore oil/gas infrastructures to include more than 250 nautical miles of safety fairways and 35 oil platforms. The ships are identifying obstructions so that U.S. Navy and Coast Guard divers can recover them, to help ensure safe passage, so recovery and relief efforts to the affected areas are not inhibited.

The LOOP provides tanker offloading and temporary storage services for crude oil transported on some of the largest tankers in the world. Most tankers offloading at LOOP are too large for U.S. inland ports. LOOP not only provides tanker offloading and temporary storage of crude oil, but also transportation of crude oil via connecting pipelines to refineries through the Gulf Coast and Midwest.

The ships located toppled oil platforms in the Gulf that are potential hazards to navigation. The toppled platforms represent nearly 40 percent of daily average oil production and nearly 60 percent of the daily average gas production, according to the U.S. Coast Guard.

In particular, one of the ships reported unsafe surveying conditions due to recently marked hazards surrounded by floating buoys connected with lines/rope, and a high probability of unmarked hazards associated with damaged/submerged oil platform structures.

Two MH-53E helicopters from Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadron Fifteen (HM-15) have joined the four ships in conducting safety fairway surveys. Mine warfare assets are working in conjunction with the U.S. Coast

Guard. They will leave the area when their unique parts of the mission are complete and civil authorities can conduct follow-on recovery operations.

“We are aware that there are many people in the region who are relying on us to verify that the waterways in and around the Gulf Coast are safe for navigation,” said CAPT Jonathan Tobias, Commodore of Mine Countermeasures Squadron Three, who is the tactical commander for the deployed mine warfare assets.

“We are pleased that the Mine Warfare Community is able to contribute to Joint Task Force Katrina,” Tobias added. “We are able to apply our mine warfare warfighting skills to provide support to the relief efforts by surveying the seaward approaches to the Gulf Coast and off-shore oil platforms.

“All of the Sailors involved in this operation are putting forth the same high-level of energy as they would if called to perform their mission in time of war. We are only one part of a larger team (of recovery efforts) and we hope we can do our best to contribute to this effort.”